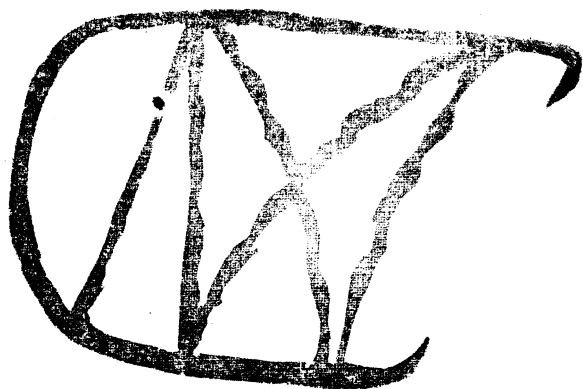
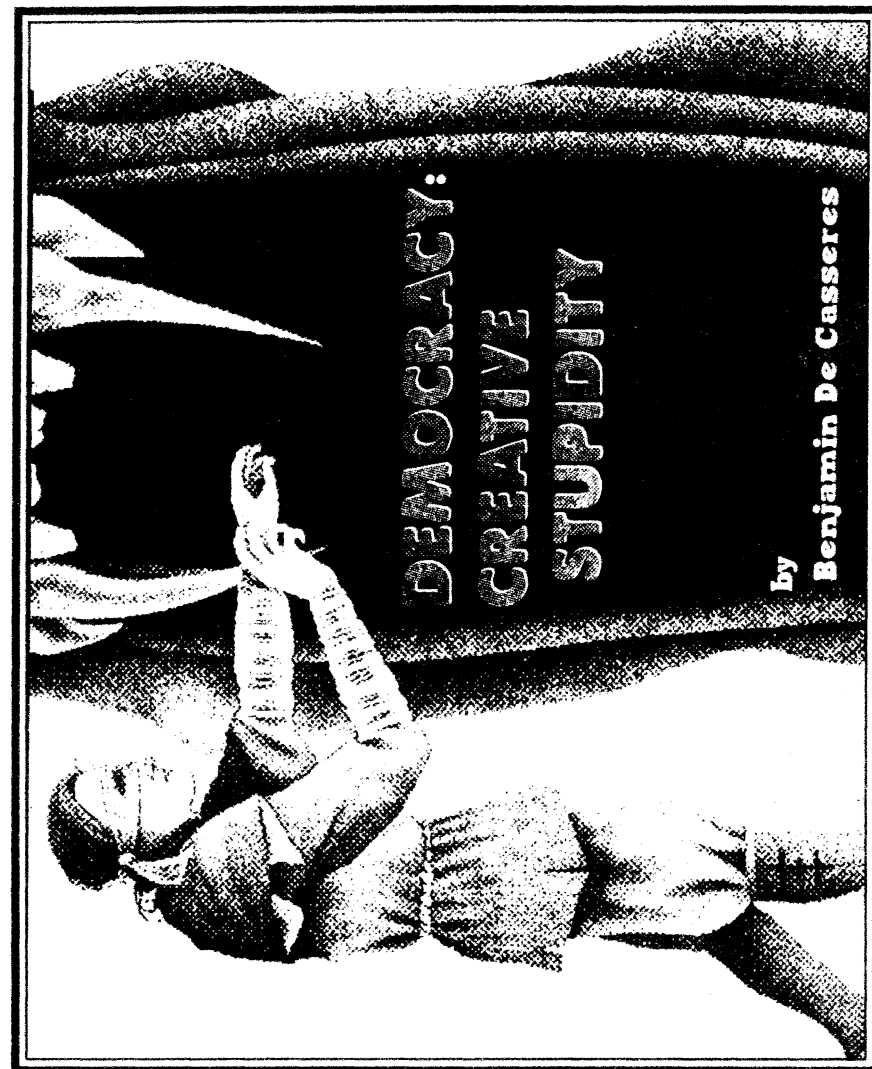


**Democracy: Creative Stupidity** is a hilarious diatribe against the herd-mind by the devilish individualist scribe Benjamin De Casseres. As a writer and thinker De Casseres doesn't fit on the conveyor belt of standard political ideologies, but his frisky barrage of puns, illogicalities, ironic definitions, and unending word games never fail to fire his readers with disruptive, illuminatory ideas—which is why we'll be publishing much more of his work in the future (as part of our ongoing campaign against the domestication and normalization of anarchist thought).

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# **DEMOCRACY: CREATIVE STUPIDITY**

**by**

**Benjamin De Casseres**



Stupidity is the genius of the human race.

Mass-thought, mass-activity, mass-vision, mass-aspiration all lack intelligence, comprehension, foresight, penetration or competence.

If these latter qualities were mass-gifts mankind wouldn't last overnight. Men would devour one another. Instead of out-dumbing one another, as they do now in the universal game of competitive stupidity, they would out-smart one another, ending in continuous individual as well as species butcheries.

Nature in her mysterious design of prolific perpetuation uses the average and the sub-average to carry on her work. She drugs, stupefies and blunts the mass-brain with common-sense, which is the glorified name of mass-stupidity.

Human stupidity seems to me as necessary as the law of gravitation or any of the other hard-and-fast mechanistic laws that rule us.

Stupidity is slothfully dynamic, creative, and produces a vast and ever-varying spectacle for the eye and brain of Intelligence, for the few beings scattered over the Earth who have uncommon-sense, penetration, comprehension and super-vision.

There is a subtle wisdom in this universal stupidity, sometimes changeable in quality but never changeable in quantity. And, like all forms of wisdom, it derives from the instinct of self-preservation (and its mother, Fear).

This union of common thought, of common motives, of common slavishness to tradition and ancient patterns of aspiration which are the primal elements in Stupidity is the defense-mechanism of the eternal, earth-vomited herd against outlaw thoughts, against the hungry and fearless Curiosity that roams around the night-fires of the race, all huddled together against the common enemy, Change.

The Universe, Nature and Man are immanently lazy. The whole natural universe carries on its face an air of lazy stupidity. Nothing varies much in the lifetime of an individual. Fundamentally, nothing varies much within the historical memory of man. Stories of great changes—geological, economical, cosmical and religious—are always mythical.

The universe and Nature seem to be so lazy, to enjoy their repetitious stupidity so much, that they, shamefacedly, hide as in a cloud all records of violent and vital changes. As Victor Hugo says in one of his great poems, "Zoilus", everything is repeated *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum*. A sleepiness, a vast drowsiness seems to permeate the suns, the planets, the Earth, man and history.

Two words are written over everything, written in everything: *Average* and *Repetition*. Life seems sometimes very near stagnation.

Among humans it is just in this margin between near-stagnation and total stagnation that surge the dynamic and creative tides.

The whole of the history of mankind is an exhibition of creative stupidity, and the evolution of man is the evolution of stupidity which, by some sort of magic, lifts him up a little higher in consciousness, awareness and bodily comfort than he was before.

There isn't an ounce of conscious human intelligence or foresight visible in mass-history—it is all animal or sub-animal intelligence, for certainly man in the mass cannot be compared to the fox or the lion. He is nearer the cow, the goose, the parrot, or the stupefying, repetitious, changeless ant, bee and beaver.

This vast mass is kept in movement by fear and hope, which are identical.

There is no sense of direction whatever in the human race. It is the flight before Pain toward a Mirage. It is kept pretty well doped on the sex-lure and the money-lure. It muddles, fumbles, stumbles and flounders through ages and epochs toward a better and higher material state that can only argue for the existence of a Demiurge of Stupidity that watches over the masses as the Devas and Daemons are said to watch over genius.

As a futilitarian and cosmic pessimist, I am still compelled in all honesty to admit that Man, conceived as a whole, is better off today than he was a thousand years ago.

What do I mean by “better off”, by “advance”? I mean that more men on the planet are more “civilized” than at any other time in the history of the globe within historical memory.

Man is unhappier than he has ever been, but more human, more tolerant, more nearly idealistic and realistic at the same time. But he is stupider than ever. His stupidity, like his “civilization” and unhappiness, is cumulative. He literally improves not through wisdom but through and because of his stupidity, which, as I said, is mass-wisdom.

As the manners of the mass soften its brain seems to soften with it. As mankind grows more complex and “civilized” it grows more incompetent to manage its affairs, social and individual. Civilization thus holds the seeds of decay. Enlightenment always presages a Fall.

There is no relation between competency and evolution.

And these babbon Presidents believe, or make-believe they believe, in this quasi-divinity with which the jakery has aureoled them. They call councils of wise-men and assistant witch-doctors to stop the panics, the floods, the fogs and the backside carnage. It all resembles so much the antics of kings, alchemists, astrologers and the groundlings of a thousand years ago that I sometimes wonder just what the euphemism “progress” means.

Creative and progressively differentiating Stupidity, however, would seem to be the eternal cycle.

Never in the history of the world have so many individuals of genius and talent come stark and straight out of the dungheap of Demos—risen *above* the average—as have arisen since the ludicrous Declaration of Independence and the Rights of Man were penned.

This is what I mean by the *dynamic* and *creative* power of stupidity. These higher men have had no effect, or very little effect, on the masses, although they have been the direct product of the freedom guaranteed to them by the blind heavings of this mass toward a Light which will never bathe it. It guarantees to its enemies—the superior man—what it is eternally forbidden to enjoy itself: autonomous freedom and egoistic expansion and activity.

Mass-docility and stupidity have never in all history reached such a degree of bovine enlightenment as in the United States of America, especially in post-war America. Even more so than in England, stupidity seems in America to have actually risen to the domain of genius.

From our Presidents down to the Jackass man-in-the-street there is a form of waking and practical stupidity which confirms one of the celebrated aphorisms of Lao Tsze, that the more bovine, mule-like and the dumber the masses and their rulers the nearer they attain the principle of utilitarian happiness.

The tremendous results, the material hegemony of America, its soaring flight in fifty years from a second-rate power to world dominance are the result of the perfect adaptation of the average American mind to the hog-calls of its magicians—its “statesmen” and politicians.

Every President, every Senator, every Representative, every Governor, every Mayor (without exception) has been for one hundred and fifty years the perfect incarnation of the unleavened mass of American stupidity, tempered by demagogic cunning.

Every question, every problem that has ever confronted the country has been bungled, muddled, “beefed” and “gummed up”. And still we roll onward to an unimaginably gorgeous and barbaric destiny. Creative and dynamic stupidity within historical memory has never achieved greater results with fewer spiritual or mental tools.

The platforms of all our political parties since the founding of the country read like bills-of-sale of Utopian estates. They are written by liars for a nation of country jakes. The inaugural addresses of our Presidents with their magical promises and miracle-cant, their claims of omnipotence and omniscience, are swallowed by the masses like the proclamations of a new Buddha.

I find everywhere—whether in business or in the empire of thought, whether among politicians or among writers and artists—that the stupidest are the most competent, if by competency we mean the perfect adjustment of means to ends. The unfittest in the highest sense are the fittest in the average sense. A dogged, numb-and-dumb stupidity will outpoint intelligence, penetration and genius.

Stupidity is without foresight or hindsight. It is blunted action and thought.

Stupidity can reason, but it is totally devoid of imagination. Mass-imagination must be injected into it from without. It has none of its own. This imagination that comes from the outside is always injected by the Magicians of Stupidity, the heroes, the demagogues and the fiat-luxers of the masses—Jesus, Moses, Mohamed, Karl Marx, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Churchill; these Munchausens of the masses have a million names. They are all real magicians of creative stupidity. Nature brings them forth as real incarnations to raise the everlasting stupidity of the race from time to time out of its intolerable boredom into the momentary gleam of enchantment by Hope.

That all of these magicians of Stupidity are in the end cheats, failures, Tartarins, and mirific liars is of no consequence, for, as I have said, the basic element of Stupidity is its blessed blindness, its lack of memory or growth (it moves, evolves, but never *grows*).

Nature has cunningly contrived to keep man a jackass. Comic genius is the Universe laughing at the Jackass.

Genius is both rare and dangerous. Too much of it would upset normality. Stupidity senses the danger to itself in Genius. It, therefore, makes a pariah of it if it does not succeed in dragging it down to its own beaver-and-ant wisdom or driving it to suicide by suffering.

What is called “progress” is Stupidity evolving naturally and normally to more various shapes of itself. Millions, for instance, call Communism a form of progress. A cunning illusion of the Master Magician, who is hidden from us. Communism is, as a matter of fact, the very culmination of man’s inherent and dynamic stupidity.

The comic core of the matter lies in the fact that it is a tremendous retrogression and descent to first principles, to the social ideals of the bee, the beaver, the ant. Man believes he is going up when he is going down and believes he is going down when he is going up.

History is the burlesque show of Man the Jackass.

Whatever he makes turns inside out and upside down. Life makes a monkey out of him. He has, sometimes, a dim feeling that this is so—then he becomes a Mob and pounds the walls of his cell with his head. Or he breaks jail and kills and smashes all he can get at. This is Stupidity's gleaming moment of genius when Man sees himself as he really is.

But there is soon another hope-bauble. Down with the Monarchy! Long live Napoleon!—Down with the Czar! Long live Lenin!—Down with the Kaiser! Long live Hitler! Always a magician just around the corner, children!

Eternal *Dummkopf*! What can you do? For some incomprehensible reason our species must go on on a tiny star lost in space, and Stupidity is the motor that must keep it going.

So clairvoyant in her economics is this Immanent Stupidity that she seldom, or never, allows men of genius or of extraordinary talent to become rulers of nations. The world has been generally ruled from the beginning down to every head of every government in the world today by men and women who in brain-power, penetration, foresight, initiative and intelligence are not far above the village idiot.

The human race wants perfect portraits, taken from many angles, of itself to worship, revere or respect, and it gets them—from the grandiose Stupidarians who ruled ancient India, the Orient and the paranoiac desert tribes of the Old Testament down to the present incumbents of democratic and collectivist thrones.

The great exceptions of the past—an Alexander the Great, a Marcus Aurelius, a Napoleon—have been imposed on the mass from without. Forms of government the most remotely removed from democratic forms are apt to raise up men who are least like the masses—superimpositions instead of incarnations. But even these aristocratic and autocratic forms cannot escape the leaven of the mass and the profound law of evolving and stabilizing stupidity.

The proof of this lies in the facts: nearly all the rulers of England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, China, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America have been stupid, spineless vulgarians dressed up, prinked and preened to look and act like supermen.

Every nation in history can count its real statesmen on the fingers of one hand. What the eternal groundling loves and worships is the politician, the manipulator and magician of its own stupidities.

It follows from this that stupidity is both a metaphysic and an ideal of the human race, that it is the soul of common-sense, that it is the dynamic Average, the dumb and sightless moving equilibrium which keeps all things in their

place, that it is the very Holy Ghost of mass-movements and their rulers—it follows that democracy is the highest form of working stupidity, the very flowering of stupidity, because it dominates, controls and fills to the brim every alley and channel of life.

Democracy is the Jackass become oracle. It is Stupidity beatified.

In a democracy all the final obstacles that confront mass-blindness are removed except the blindness. And so marvelous, so unconquerable is this inherent stupidity in its all-wisdom that man is made to appear to himself never more knowing, never more self-conscious, never more all-powerful than when he is stupidest.

I am not here making any plea for or against democracy, nor for or against the magical and spectacularly enchanting effects of stupidity as a working political and economic philosophy. I am, and expect to remain for the rest of my life, a radical democratic individualist. I believe in an evolving approximation to the Jeffersonian-Spencerian-Emersonian no-state. I believe only in the natural caste-system of intelligence and character. I believe Socialism and Communism to be as anti-democratic as an absolute monarchy. And I believe, lastly, in the democratic-individualistic-competitive social system because it is the best breeding ground for a real aristocracy, an autonomous class of the self-reliant, free men and women, artists, poets, thinkers and creative idlers.

In so far, then, as I believe that democracy is the very flower of stupidity working through social and economic forms, I also believe that it is the dungheap that has fertilized—and would continue to fertilize if left to evolve—the great anti-stupidarians, the Berserker Individuals, unallied, untrammelled, unafraid.

Since the French and American Revolutions and the rise of Demos there has been more freedom, more progress in every field, more creative activity, more individual liberty and more and greater *individuals*—a roll of their names would make a book—than in all the centuries that preceded. The only rivals to this period in the history of the world are the so-called democracy of Athens and the nearly free Italian city-states of the Renaissance.

I announce, then, this paradox as a truth: democracy, which is the very flowering of mass-stupidity, is also the greatest stimulus to individual revolt **from** the mass. In so far as stupidity functions freely and absolutely it produces its opposite: genius.

Nothing in the history of the race has been so productive of variation, of an almost Babelian chaos of differences, nothing has produced so many antithetical and warring ideas and individuals in every field as democracy.